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# WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE COMING YEAR?

My theme this morning is in the question, What shall we do with the coming year? And, as the text, I take those very familiar words from the ninetieth Psalm and the twelfth verse: —

"So teach us to number our days, that we may get us an heart of wisdom."

From the tiniest atom of which science can take any account to the grandest bodies in the skies about us, the movements of the universe are rhythmic. The earth sweeps away from the sun, and then turns back on its course again. Day alternates with night, heat with cold, summer with winter. And it seems to me altogether fitting and well that, so far as we can, we should make our lives chime in with this rhythmic, alternating movement of things; just as, for example, that man is the best sailor who does not resist the movements of the ship, but conforms himself perfectly to them.

So I heartily believe that it is a good and profitable thing that our human lives should alternate, not only in those matters over which we have no control,— as weariness and rest, as sleep and waking,— but in matters like our summer vacation,— our getting away for a while, it may be, from the competition, the struggle, the toil, the worry, and finding recreation and peace by looking on the larger and the eternal things of the world.

I congratulate those of you who have been able to be away for at least a part of the summer. I extend to such of you as have not been able to be away my sincerest sympathy. I hope the time may come when all human life shall be so far released from compulsory drudgery that we shall

not be compelled always to work in order to live, but may be able part of the time merely to live, and let the work be incidental.

Some of us have been able to sit down by the seashore and hear the grand anthems that the storms have played upon the beach or the finer music of the tinier waves. Some of us have been in the country,— have swung in a hammock, under a tree, and watched a single cloud, like a tiny ship, sailing across the blue, or the great cloud masses, like freighted fleets, ploughing the upper air. Some of us have sat under trees, and watched the shadows come and go, and listened to the bird music. Some of us have sat down by the foot or have climbed to the summits of great mountains, and felt the thrill and beauty of the strength that has its seat in the everlasting hills. Some of us have been permitted to cross the ocean,— to lean over the rail and watch the changing beauties, glories, of the sea. Some of us, perhaps, have climbed up into the places where the clouds are made and where the rivers are born.

But, wherever we may have been, we have come now, most of us, to the beginning of what is really another year to us; for, in spite of the almanac, our work-a-day year, the year of those of us who reside in the cities of North America, begins in the autumn. We are now standing on its threshold, and are looking out over the weeks and months that are to compose it with the question facing us as to what we shall do with this coming year.

There is a preliminary question, however, that needs for a moment to be considered. We talk lightly and thoughtlessly sometimes, as if, no matter at what age we have arrived, we still had the power to do — in the time that awaits us — whatever we would. But a little careful thought will reveal to us the fact that we have no such power.

We need, then, to ask the question, What can we do with the coming year? for there are limitations that will tax all our strength, try our patience, chill our enthusiasm, dash

many of our hopes. We have been unhappy the past year. Can we be happy the next? Perhaps. We have not succeeded very well in our business ventures the past year. Are we to get rich the coming year? Perhaps. We have longed for some social station that has not been ours. Can we gain it the coming year? Perhaps. We have desired fame, recognition, power among men. Can we win it? Perhaps.

But we must remember that we are in the presence of tremendous forces that constitute the universe about us, and that over these forces we have very little control. The only power we have in dealing with the universe is in learning what are its laws, and humbly obeying those laws.

There are limitations, then, on every hand, that we may find ourselves baffled by. Then there are internal limitations of which I wish to speak; for we need to take serious account of them in their bearing upon the life that is before us. Can we do as we will in the coming year? Can we will as we will in the coming year? Though not strictly accurate as a question, that conveys to you what I mean.

What we shall desire, and our ability to attain these, are largely determined by what we have been doing with the years since we were born, whether they be ten or twenty or forty or sixty or seventy. We have been making ourselves; and we have been determining our chances. We have been creating all sorts of internal limitations which are going to hamper us and determine us in the coming year, either for ill or for good.

We sometimes talk about "free will" as though this will of ours was a coachman sitting on a box and holding the reins, and able to drive whithersoever he pleases. It is a good deal nearer to the truth to say that our wills are like the current of a river on which we are swept along; for our wills are largely the summed up tendencies of our being, our character, what we are, what we have made ourselves.

Shall we be able, then, during the coming year, to desire